

# The development of diaspora engagement policies in Burundi and Rwanda

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### **The Development of Diaspora Engagement Policies in Burundi and Rwanda**

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# **The Development of Diaspora Engagement Policies in Burundi and Rwanda**

Sonja Fransen<sup>1</sup> & Melissa Siegel<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

Many countries are currently exploring their diaspora's potential to contribute to local development processes. These countries face numerous challenges in effectively engaging their diasporas such as a lack of experience and resources. Conflict-affected countries, however, face legacies from the past that might challenge diaspora engagement processes. They often also struggle with security issues in the post-conflict phase in addition to these challenges. This chapter compares the diaspora engagement initiatives of two neighbouring countries in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa: Rwanda and Burundi. Both countries recognize the potential of their diasporas, but they are at different stages of diaspora policy development. Results show that Rwanda actively addresses the challenges in reaching out to their diaspora by focusing on diasporic unity and communication between diaspora groups and the Rwanda government. Rwanda has also embedded its Diaspora Policy in its long-term development plan. A lack of data however exists on the effectiveness of these efforts. In contrast, Burundi still needs to create the diasporic institutional environment for its diaspora engagement and diaspora engagement policies. A high level of cooperation should be present between ministries, international organizations and the diaspora to create effective policies. For diaspora engagement initiatives to succeed in conflict-affected societies such as Burundi and Rwanda, however, the most important condition is that the countries' security situations become increasingly stable in the near future.

Keywords: Burundi, Rwanda, Diapora, Diaspora Engagement, Migration and Development

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## 1. Introduction

To ‘convert the brain drain into brain gain’ (Oucho 2006), many countries are exploring diaspora engagement opportunities that can contribute to local development. The commitment of home country governments to harnessing the development potential of the diaspora is revealed by the launch of different government institutions in developing countries. These diaspora-specific institutions have been created to establish an institutional infrastructure to strengthen and increase the links between diasporas and their home countries (Agunias 2009; ICMPD and IOM 2010).<sup>3</sup> This trend of diaspora involvement in local development originates from a general interest in globalization issues that emerged in research and policy making in the past decades (Castles and Miller 2009). Simultaneous to this trend, research on remittances—the money migrants send home to family and friends in their origin country—increased sharply due to a substantial rise in official remittance flows around the world (De Haas 2006).

There are many channels through which diasporas can exert influence on their home countries. The most obvious channel is monetary support by means of either collective or individual remittances. Most early diaspora policy initiatives focused on the facilitation and enhancement of remittances flows (De Haas 2006; Newland and Patrick 2004). However, there is growing awareness of other channels of diaspora involvement, such as the transfers of skills and knowledge, the role diasporas can play in advocating for their cultures and promoting their home countries as tourist destinations, and the diaspora’s participation in political processes (De Haas 2006). In addition, the influence of diasporas on economic processes through investments, market innovation, and the outsourcing of production is currently a major driving force of diaspora involvement for many developing countries.

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<sup>3</sup> This emergency of new policy making has led the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to work on a joint project to assess the diaspora engagement policy at an institutional level in several African countries. Their project, *MTM: A Dialogue in Action: Linking Emigrant Communities for more Development* recently published (2010) *An Inventory of Institutional Capabilities and Practices* in Algeria, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Syria and Tunisia outlining the current institutional frameworks and policies in place in each country to engage their diaspora.

Countries interested in their diaspora's potential take different approaches in addressing the resources of their diasporas, depending on their needs and capacities (Agunias 2009; Newland and Patrick 2004). Conflict-affected countries, for example, are often interested in tapping their diaspora's potential to attain economic reconstruction and sustainable peace.

Conflict-affected countries face important challenges in constructing effective and sustainable diaspora engagement policies, however. First, diasporas are rarely homogenous groups (see e.g. Warnecke 2010). So called 'conflict-generated diasporas' (Lyons 2004) often include a complex mix of people that arrived in their host countries at different times, for different reasons, through different means, and with different statuses (Koser and Van Hear 2003). These large differences within the diaspora imply different attitudes toward the country of origin. Similarly, the ways in which they are involved at the individual or collective level in economic, social or political networks is highly variable. Due to this heterogeneity, governments struggle when reaching out to their diasporas or may even be selective in their efforts.

Second, the fact that diasporas often consist of different groups of migrants may lead to low levels of trust within the diaspora. A case study on Burundian organizations in the Netherlands, for example, showed that most Burundians were organized along ethnic lines, and a high level of suspicion existed between the groups (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010). This could lead to tensions and sometimes even conflict within the diaspora. Diasporic heterogeneity implies different groups may not form cohesive bodies that act collectively in their home-country engagement.

Third, there is often distrust between the government and its diaspora. Migrants fleeing from conflict often leave their countries involuntarily—many times in an attempt to escape political prosecution. These conflict-generated diasporas sometimes harbour grievances towards their homelands, which may result in negative involvement (Brazier

2008; Cochrane 2007; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2008; Lyons 2004). Certain African diasporas have been reported to be actively involved in conflict dynamics in their home countries, either by supporting and facilitating conflict or inhibiting it (Mohamoud 2006; Turner and Mossin 2010; Warnecke 2010). This history of migration motives and previous involvement in home-land politics influences the future cooperation between governments and their diaspora members (see e.g. Turner and Mossin 2010).

Fourth, conflict-affected countries often experience incidents of conflict or violence in the aftermath of war. A ‘post-conflict’ country is rarely completely free of conflict--a fact that highlights the ambiguity of the term (Addison and Brück 2009). These incidents of violence not only divert the attention of home country governments away from diaspora engagement, but also prevent the diaspora from being actively involved through investments and local participatory programs.

This chapter deals with the development of diaspora engagement policies in Burundi and Rwanda. These countries are located in the Central African Great Lakes Region, a region characterized by failing democratic transitions, civil wars, and extreme poverty, all of which have contributed to numerous violent conflicts and large migration movements over the past decades. Whereas Rwanda marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1994 genocide in 2009 amidst a stable political environment characterized by large-scale reconstruction and reconciliation programs, Burundi has only recently become politically stable after the 2005 elections and the 2006 peace agreement with the Force National de Liberation (FNL), the last active rebel group in the country. Both Burundi and Rwanda recognize the potential of their diasporas in rebuilding their countries, but their diaspora engagement policies are at different stages of development. Rwanda put into place a diaspora engagement policy in 2009 and considered it as a tool in reaching the goals of their Vision 2020, Rwanda’s national development plan. Burundi is currently taking its first steps in creating a diaspora engagement policy. In the

Rwandan case, the question is to what extent the diaspora policy has been effective in reaching its diaspora and tapping into its potential? This might provide interesting insights for the policy development process in Burundi, where the extent to which the Burundian government can realize its diaspora potential is questioned because of the fragile state of peace within the country and the challenges the country still faces in terms of national reconciliation (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010).



**Figure 1: The Central African Great Lakes Region**



## **2. Histories of Migration and Diaspora Formation in Rwanda and Burundi**

Rwanda and Burundi, as neighbouring countries in the Central African Great Lakes Region, share some similarities in terms of their history of conflict and migration. These histories are at some times intertwined, for conflict and large displacements in the Great Lakes Region have evolved into cyclical patterns with frequent spill-over effects (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010; Spaan and Van Moppes 2006). Important differences between the two countries exist as well, however. As the development of diaspora engagement policies is highly embedded in the historic context of the two countries, this chapter provides a short overview of the conflict and migration histories of both countries.

### **2.1 Rwanda**

Rwanda was characterized by violent ethnic conflict for many years.<sup>4</sup> The Tutsi minority dominated Rwandan politics at the beginning of the 19th century, and under Belgian colonial rule the ethnic distinction between Hutu and Tutsi intensified. This led to a Hutu rebellion in 1959 and the deaths of almost 50,000 Tutsi. After independence the Hutu majority took power and violently suppressed the Tutsi; many Tutsi died in mass killings in the early 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1990s, tensions increased once more and escalated into a civil war that lasted for four years. Then, on April 6, 1994, the president of Rwanda Juvénal Habyarimana was killed in an airplane crash, and genocide broke out in Rwanda. More than 500,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed over a period of 100 days (Des Forges 1999). As a result of these violent conflicts, Rwanda has seen large migratory flows. In 1994 the conflict in Rwanda caused a massive migration wave that included over two million people (out of a total population of 6.5 million). Most migrants fled to both neighbouring countries (Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi) and Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> see e.g. Prunier, 1995, for an overview of Rwanda's history of conflict

The stock of emigrants originating from Rwanda as a percentage of the population was 2.2 percent in 2005 (World Bank 2008). Most of these migrants settled in Uganda, Tanzania, Belgium, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Italy, or the Netherlands. The emigration rate for Rwanda was 2.7 percent in 2009. A total of 85.2 percent of these migrants moved to other African countries (UNDP 2009).

Rwanda's diaspora population is scattered around the globe, and is large and diverse. It is also active and highly politically engaged (Black, McLean Hilker, and Pooley 2004). Rwanda's skilled emigration rate in 2000 was 19 percent of all tertiary-educated individuals (World Bank 2008), which shows that a large share of Rwanda's diaspora is highly educated. Rwandans also contribute substantially to their home-country economy by means of remittances. Officially-recorded remittances flows have increased steadily over the past decade, from US \$7 million in 2000 to US \$21 million in 2006 (World Bank 2008). The UNDP (2009) reports that in 2007, US \$51 million in remittances were received by Rwanda. According to the Diaspora General Directorate in Rwanda, however, the total amount of remittances received increased from US \$42.85 million in 2005 to US \$172.40 million in 2009.

## **2.2 Burundi**

Burundi has been plagued by more waves of civil conflict since its independence from Belgium in 1962 than Rwanda has. Burundi's first democratically-elected government was installed in 2005, and only recently has the country experienced a period of stability and peace. As a result of the violent conflicts in Burundi and surrounding countries, the country has experienced large migration flows (see Table 1 for an overview), with the largest out-migration flows taking place in 1972 and 1993. These flows mainly consisted of internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking safe havens in other parts of Burundi and refugees fleeing

over the border to neighbouring countries such as Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, Burundi served as a destination for refugees from other countries as conflict continued across the whole region (Fransen and Siegel 2010).

**Table 1: Major Conflicts and Out-Migration in Burundi**

	1965	1972	1988	1991	1993
Duration of conflict (months)	2	4	2	1	108
Deaths (thousands)	5	200	15	1-3	300
Refugees (thousands) <sup>1</sup>	0	300	50	38	687
Ratio of deaths plus refugees over total population	0.2	14.0	1.3	0.7	17.1

Source: Ngaruku & Nkurunziza, 2005.

Burundi is still both an immigration and emigration country. Refugees residing in Burundi are mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, to some extent, Rwanda. The country currently hosts around 100,000 IDPs as well. Since the security situation has improved in Burundi, the number of IDPs has decreased slowly from over 280,000 in 2003 (ICG 2003) to 100,000 (UNHCR 2010) as of October 2010. Most refugees originating from Burundi live in Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda. Tanzania currently hosts the most Burundian refugees, most of whom are located in the ‘Old Settlements’ created by the Tanzanian government after the 1972 inflow of refugees from Burundi.<sup>5</sup>

A smaller proportion of Burundian refugees fled to western countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada, where they established an active Burundian diaspora network (Fransen and Ong’ayo 2010; Turner 2008a; 2008b). An estimation of the size of the Burundian diaspora is difficult to provide as this depends heavily on the immigration statistics of the different migrant-receiving countries (Fransen and Siegel

<sup>5</sup> In 1972 a genocide took place in Burundi that was directed at Hutu society members and that was executed by a rebellion group from within the mostly Tutsi dominated army. An estimated 80,000 to 210,000 Hutu were killed during this period and hundreds of thousand people fled the country, mostly to neighbouring countries such as Tanzania and Rwanda (Fransen & Ong’ayo, 2010).

2010). The Burundian diaspora, which mostly consists of Burundians from Hutu origin, has been highly politically active: “Their main *raison d’être* was to create alternative visions of society and to attempt by all means to influence and change the political system in Burundi [...]” (Turner and Mossin 2010, p. 5). The political views within the diaspora differed substantially, however, due to the different migration histories of the diaspora members.

The Burundian diaspora, like the Rwandan diaspora, is well equipped in terms of human capital. Many diaspora members are highly educated, yet Burundi itself currently lacks residents of these skills as a result of decades of civil war and discrimination in the educational system (Turner and Mossin 2010). New migration patterns from Burundi have recently emerged, mostly consisting of highly-skilled migrants who move to Europe and Western Africa. South Africa also receives a substantial number of migrants from Burundi. These migrants can be mainly classified as economic migrants who are in search of better educational and economic opportunities. Due to a lack of data, no official statistics on these flows are available. Ratha and Xu (2008) estimate stock of emigrants at 315,477 or 4.2 percent of the population in 2005, with top destinations including Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Canada, Belgium, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Italy, and Germany. They also estimate the emigration rate of the tertiary educated at almost 20 percent, which includes a large percentage of doctors and nurses.

Officially-recorded remittances, a clear way that diaspora can be engaged in their home country, were estimated at US \$1 million dollars in 2006, down from US \$4 million in 2003. Remittances constitute an important source of income in Burundi even though access to international remittances might not apply equally to all groups and regions. Remittances are mainly used to meet basic subsistence needs of family members, relatives and close friends as well as for education and health care. Remittances are also used for the

construction of houses and purchase of property in preparation for return or as an investment (De Bruyn and Wets 2006; Fransen and Onga'yo 2010).

### **3. Diaspora Engagement Initiatives in Rwanda and Burundi**

#### **3.1 Rwanda**

In the early 2000's, around ten years after the 1994 Genocide, Rwanda started to recognize its diaspora potential (Black, McLean Hilker, and Pooley 2004). Before that time, developing international migration and diaspora engagement policies was not a high priority for the Rwandan government, which was struggling to not only rebuild its economic infrastructure but also to restore social ties within society. In June 2009 the Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation of Rwanda published the Rwanda Diaspora Policy (Republic of Rwanda 2009b). In this policy the government introduced its strategy to engage its diaspora in national development and to strengthen the ties between Rwanda and its citizens abroad. As the Rwanda Diaspora Policy states: "the Government of Rwanda (GoR) strongly believes that the Rwandan Diaspora is an important constituent that cannot be ignored and which, if it is well harnessed, can contribute to national socio-economic development" (Republic of Rwanda 2009b, p. 5).

The Rwandan Diaspora Policy is based on three pillars: the increase of cohesion within and between the different Rwandan diaspora around the world, the stimulation of communication between Rwanda and its diaspora, and the stimulation of the active role of the Rwandan diaspora in the socio-economic development of the country. The diaspora is to be engaged in development processes by means of financial transfers, knowledge and skill transfers, contributions to technology development, export promotion, and the promotion of Rwandan culture. Sectors in which the diaspora could contribute are education, health,

business, investment, unity and reconciliation, community development, and foreign investments (Republic of Rwanda 2009).

The Rwanda Diaspora Policy is considered a tool for reaching the goals of the Vision 2020 program, which is Rwanda's development plan that was implemented in 2000. The main goal of the Vision 2020 initiative is to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country by the year 2020. At the time that the initiative was first implemented, this goal entailed, for example, a per capita income increase of more than 300 percent and a decrease of poverty by 200 percent (Republic of Rwanda 2000). Table 2 provides an overview of the pillars of the Vision 2020. The Rwanda Diaspora Policy is mainly based on three pillars of the Vision 2020: good governance, private sector development, and human resource development.

Unity and reconciliation are important underlying themes in the Vision 2020, which include the diaspora as well: "Rwanda will become a modern, united and prosperous nation founded on the positive values of its culture. The nation will be open to the world, including its own Diaspora. Rwandans will be a people, sharing the same vision for the future and ready to contribute to social cohesion, equity and equality of opportunity" (Republic of Rwanda 2000, p. 12). The Rwandan diaspora is also explicitly mentioned in the Rwanda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (IMF 2008). The diaspora is, for example, mentioned in the context of diaspora bonds, following the example of other developing countries in Africa such as Ethiopia. Emphasis is also placed on the transfer of skills of Rwandan migrants through different programs and projects, and on their potential contributions to national savings by means of investments.

**Table 2: Rwanda's Pillars of the Vision 2020**

<b>Pillars of the Vision 2020</b>	<b>Cross-cutting areas of Vision 2020</b>
1. Good governance and a capable state	1. Gender equality
2. Human resource development and a knowledge based economy	2. Protection of environment and sustainable natural resource management
3. Private sector-led economy	3. Science and technology, including ICT
4. Infrastructure development	
5. Productive and market oriented agriculture	
6. Regional and international economic integration	

Source: Republic of Rwanda (2000).

### **3.2 Burundi**

The development of migration and development policy in Burundi began only recently due to recent stability in the country. The long period of conflict in Burundi shifted the priorities of the Burundian government to other pressing issues such as security and the provision of basic needs. The government is now becoming more interested in migration and development policies and is establishing different initiatives to tap into the resources of the diaspora. Different international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are active in the field of migration and development in Burundi as well (Fransen and Siegel 2010).

According to Turner and Mossin (2010), the Burundian government has three motivations to establish good relations with its diaspora members abroad. First, the Burundian diaspora has been an important political actor from a distance since its establishment. Being on good terms with previous political actors who are now resident abroad is envisioned as a good strategy to relieve some of the political tensions that still simmer in Burundi. Second, the Burundian government is highly interested in the skills and knowledge of its citizens abroad for use in rebuilding the country. Third, in order to establish national unity and reconciliation—both of which are essential to securing sustainable peace



in the country--strong bonds with the Burundian diaspora would be key, as they can help alleviate former ethnic tensions.

The Burundian diaspora has been engaged in activities in Burundi throughout the duration of its exile, but after 2005 when the conflict officially ended, their role changed from being political actors to potential players in nation-building and reconstruction efforts (Turner 2008a). The Burundian diaspora has much to offer in terms of monetary support and in the transfer of knowledge and skills (Turner and Mossin 2010). Many members of the diaspora are highly skilled and specialised in health and education (Ratha and Xu 2008). From within the Burundian diaspora, efforts are being made to reunite diaspora members to contribute to the communities and provinces they left behind as well. In Belgium, for example, the Burundian diaspora, which is mainly comprised of refugees stemming from the 1972 and 1993 refugee waves, is becoming better-structured and organised to address collective reconstruction efforts (IOM 2009).

#### **4. Institutions Involved in Diaspora Engagement**

##### **4.1 Rwanda**

Since 2000, different initiatives have been put into place in Rwanda to realize the potential of the Rwandan diaspora, which is playfully referred to as Rwanda's 'sixth province' (Republic of Rwanda 2010). The Rwandan diaspora is defined as "all Rwandans who left their country voluntarily or were forced to live in other countries of the world and are willing to contribute to the development of Rwanda" (Republic of Rwanda 2009, p. 6). To engage its diaspora Rwanda has established specific government bodies, but it also cooperates closely with different international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to better

link its diaspora. See Appendix 1 for a graphic overview of the institutional involvement in diaspora engagement in Rwanda and Burundi.

#### 4.1.1 Government initiatives

In 2001 the Rwanda government launched the Rwanda Global Diaspora Network (RGDN). The RDGN is however an independent association that is led by Rwandan diaspora members in Rwanda's capital Kigali. The RDGN is considered an umbrella organization under which member organisations from varying host countries are brought together for the sake of stimulating and promoting the cooperation and communication among the Rwandan diaspora worldwide. The goal of this network is to stimulate financial transfers--including remittances, investments and savings--from the diaspora to Rwanda.

In the same year the Rwandan Government also established a department on diaspora engagement within the Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation (MINAFFET). The Diaspora General Directorate (DGD) was eventually established in June 2008. This directorate is part of the General Directorates within the Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation, and was installed to enforce the linkages between Rwanda and its citizens abroad. The DGD provides information on investment possibilities, information on job opportunities, and practical assistance to Rwandans who would like to be involved in their home country. The DGD currently has five departments: administration, investment promotion, mobilisation and advocacy, capacity building, and information and communication.

The national banking system in Rwanda is heavily involved in diaspora engagement initiatives as well. In 2008 the National Bank of Rwanda (BNR) in cooperation with the Rwandan diaspora set up the Rwandan Diaspora Mutual Fund (RDMF). The fund was put under supervision of the DGD and was designed to collect the financial resources from

Rwandans living abroad to invest in national development. At the beginning the RDMF was invested in treasury bonds that are issued by the BNR. At a later stage the RDMF will be used to invest in corporate bonds and stocks. The government treasury bonds were first issued by the BNR in 2008 to stimulate contributions from the diaspora to support Rwanda's capital market.

#### 4.1.2 International organizations

The DGD in Rwanda works closely with several international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Different programs have been set up to engage the Rwandan diaspora, such as the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) Great Lakes initiative implemented by the IOM in 2001, the volunteer services provided by VSO, and the Support Project to the Implementation of The Rwanda Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Volunteer Programme established by UNDP. Both the TOKTEN and MIDA programme were transferred from the Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA) to the DGD in 2009 to enhance coordination. The IOM reports that around 100 projects have been completed since the beginning of the MIDA programme.

The IOM has also been working in Rwanda on the World Diaspora Database since 2009. This initiative is part of the MIDA programme and is designed to track the diaspora of several participating countries according to their current countries of residence, country of origin, and educational and professional characteristics. The aim of establishing the database is to analyze the human resources that diaspora have at their disposal to contribute to their home countries.

#### 4.1.3 Non-governmental organizations

Apart from government bodies and international organizations, Rwanda also hosts many independent diaspora associations such as the Rwanda Convention Association (RCA), the Rwanda-American Chamber of Commerce (RACC), and Rwanda Diaspora Investment Ltd. Many different projects are implemented by the numerous diaspora NGOs, and frequent gatherings take place in which the different diaspora organizations meet and discuss their involvement in Rwanda. An example of such a gathering is the Rwanda Convention, which is organized each year by the Rwanda Convention Association.

## **4.2 Burundi**

The issue of diaspora involvement in reconstruction efforts has recently risen on the agenda of Burundian policy makers. While the diaspora were previously engaged in the domestic political process from abroad, with the onset of a more stable peaceful situation the diaspora has begun to focus its efforts on development and reconstruction efforts. Burundi is now following Rwanda's lead by creating a formal infrastructure to manage and facilitate diaspora involvement as a means to boost its economy.

Both state and non-state actors are currently active in the area of diaspora engagement in Burundi. The main state actors in diaspora engagement are the Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation and the Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, although it has been stated that only the Ministry of Public Security is now in charge of migration management and policy. International organization involvement in diaspora engagement comes mainly from the IOM, and non-governmental involvement stems mainly from private initiatives in Europe (particularly Belgium). See Appendix 1 for a quick overview.

### **4.2.1 Government initiatives**

The Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation has created the Directorate of Diaspora to address diaspora engagement while the Ministry of Labour and Civil Service runs the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme established by the IOM locally. Recently, however, the Ministry of Public Security in Burundi has been given exclusive responsibility to address migration management issues and to construct the migration and diaspora involvement policy.

The Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation created the Directorate of Diaspora in October 2009, which became staffed in January 2010. The Directorate is very young and seems to be a step in the right direction with regards to migration and development policy making, but it lacks the capacity to be effective with a staff of only three people. These three people are tasked with understanding the greater diaspora and forging connections with them. One of the Directorate's first tasks is to create a database of the diaspora through different embassies abroad, but this task is proving to be very difficult because of distrust within the diaspora. Now that the Ministry of Public Security is in charge of migration management and policy, it is unclear how the other ministries will fit into the new scheme.

#### 4.2.2 International Organizations

The Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) program is an Africa-wide program run by the IOM in conjunction with home country governments, and its primary objective is to engage highly-skilled members of the diaspora in periods of short-term return for capacity building. The MIDA program in Burundi has existed since 2001, is run through the Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, and is part of the "MIDA Great Lakes" program, which includes Rwanda. The program is currently in its fourth phase and is run in conjunction with the IOM in Kinshasa and IOM Brussels, where it is also financed. In the case of Burundi, MIDA is

focused on the diaspora in Europe and particularly in Belgium. The first three phases of the program, from 2002-2008, dealt exclusively with education projects. There are currently eight projects running in the areas of education, health, and rural development. A total of 131 people have moved through the program since its inception in 2001, and 22 will have completed the program in 2010 alone.

#### 4.2.3 Non-governmental Organizations

In Belgium, the Burundian diaspora, which is mainly comprised of refugees stemming from the 1972 and 1993 refugee waves, is becoming better-structured and organised to address collective reconstruction efforts (IOM 2009). After seeing a need for reduced costs of sending remittances and to reduce the risks in informal methods, for instance, an association of Burundians in Belgium took the initiative to create *Mutualité d'Epargne et de Crédit* (Mutec) (Turner and Mossin 2010). Turner and Mossin (2010) also note other initiatives taken on by the Burundian diaspora, including town twinning projects and home town associations. Other development initiatives include *Competences Sans Frontiers* (CSF), which tries to involve the Burundian Diaspora in development. One of the largest diaspora organizations is the *Communauté Burundaise de Belgique* (CBB). According to the same study, other initiatives taken by Burundians in the diaspora include CIRID (*Centre Indépendant de Recherches et d'Initiatives pour le Dialogue* or Independent Centre of Research and Initiative for the Dialogue) based in Geneva. Although their primary task is to promote peaceful dialogue, the organization has also been involved in various development projects. While the largest share of Burundians are organized in Belgium, there are about 20 Burundian diaspora organizations in the Netherlands, including both formally registered organizations and informal groups (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010).<sup>6</sup> The active diaspora in

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with BWPD November 26, 2009

Belgium is even more notable for their organisation of large-scale meetings such as the European Meeting of the Burundian Diaspora, which they held in May 2008 with the theme “Engaging the Diaspora of the reconstruction of Burundi” (IOM 2009)

#### 4.2.4 Private organizations

While the diaspora has been active in the political arena, more has been done recently to attract their financial investments. According to Turner and Mossin (2010), a private bank called BCB (Banque de Crédit de Bujumbura, [www.bcb.bi](http://www.bcb.bi)) has started two initiatives to help the diaspora in their financial activities in Burundi. First, the bank made it possible for the diaspora to open savings accounts in the bank and to manage their accounts via online banking. The objective of these accounts is to ‘aid members of the diaspora who have the means, in creating liaisons with their country of origin, so that they may have sufficient funds when on vacation in Burundi or to invest – in particular in property’ (Turner and Mossin 2010). The second initiative aims to help the diaspora invest in real estate in Burundi. If a diaspora member has a savings account with the bank, they are able to take a loan and invest in a house in a specific area that is to be created along Lake Tanganyika, south of Bujumbura.

As mentioned earlier, an association of Burundians in Belgium took the initiative to create Mutualité d’Epargne et de Crédit (MUTEC) to provide money transfer services.<sup>7</sup> MUTEC first opened an office in Bujumbura in July 2004 and now has offices across the country while also expanding to five other countries in Africa. MUTEC is a private initiative similar in structure and function to a micro credit organization (Turner and Mossin 2010). Another type of private initiative is Radio Isanganiro, or “Meeting Point”, which was established in 2002. This Bujumbura-based station has the objective to promote peace and reconciliation through dialogue ([www.isanganiro.org](http://www.isanganiro.org)). Since 2003 Radio Isanganiro has

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<sup>7</sup> Mutec’s homepage ([www.codibu.org](http://www.codibu.org)).

broadcast an interactive programme ‘Diaspora’, where the Diaspora can call in and discuss recent events in the country (Turner and Mossin 2010).

## **5. Diaspora Engagement: Challenges and Opportunities in Burundi and Rwanda**

### **5.1 Divisions within the diaspora**

As described in the introduction, the first challenge countries recovering from violent conflict face in their diaspora engagement initiatives is the heterogeneity of, or divisions within, the diaspora. Second, this heterogeneity might lead to an internally divided diaspora with low levels of cohesion and trust. Both the Rwandan and Burundian diaspora are highly heterogeneous. Refugees arrived at their destinations in different time periods, for different reasons, and through migration flows that often represented violence or oppression of a certain ethnic group.

The Rwandan government acknowledges the diversity of its diaspora by classifying them into different types of migrants: 1) Rwandans that fled the country due to political and security reasons, 2) Rwandans that went abroad for economic reasons or educational purposes, and 3) the descendents of these types of migrants (Republic of Rwanda 2009). Increasing the cohesion within and between the different Rwandan diaspora is one of the pillars of the Rwandan diaspora policy. Different initiatives have been launched to bring different diaspora groups together and stimulate cooperation. Not all diaspora groups are supporters of the current government, though, and there are indications that the Rwandan government is selective in reaching out to its diaspora (see e.g. Black, McLean Hilker, and Pooley 2004). This claim has, however, not been researched in detail.



The Burundian diaspora is heterogeneous as well, and internal divisions within the diaspora, mostly in terms of political views and ethnicity, have challenged the unity of the diaspora (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010; Turner and Mossin 2010). Turner and Mossin (2010) even argue that, because of this heterogeneity, it is not correct to use the term 'the Burundian diaspora'. Historical and still-present differences within the diaspora, and between different organizations within the diaspora, have led to cases of low trust levels between diaspora groups, for example in the Burundian diaspora in the Netherlands (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010). These divisions naturally challenge the diaspora engagement initiatives by the Burundian government and should be taken into account in the design of a diaspora engagement policy.

## **5.2 Relationships with the host country**

For diaspora engagement initiatives to succeed, relationships between home country governments and their diaspora abroad must be constructive and structured along frequent communication (Agunias 2009). In conflict-affected societies, however, the history of migration, motives, and previous involvement in home-land politics of diaspora members may influence future cooperation between governments and their diaspora.

The Rwandan government focuses specifically on the stimulation of communication between Rwanda and its diaspora through its diaspora policy. The Rwanda Global Diaspora Network, for example, was launched to stimulate communication and hereby enforce the linkages between the different diaspora groups and the Rwandan government. In addition the Rwandan government has made an effort to map its diaspora around the globe by participating in the World Diaspora Database, which was designed and initiated by the IOM.

The heterogeneity<sup>8</sup> within the Burundian diaspora clearly has an effect on the relationship between the Burundian government and its diaspora. As described earlier, the Burundian diaspora is currently in a process of transformation following the elections in 2005. The Burundian government is trying to enforce the linkages with its citizens abroad, but diaspora members themselves currently hold different views on their engagement in peace and reconstruction efforts in Burundi (Turner and Mossin 2010). Some diaspora members are positive about the initiatives of the Burundian government to reach out to its diaspora while others do not trust the intentions of the government and continue to take on an opposing role. Turner and Mossin (2010) also argue that the diaspora engagement initiatives that are employed by the Burundian government do not meet the wants and needs of the Burundian diaspora: “In particular, the majority of initiatives lack awareness about the political engagement and identity of Burundians in exile, thus often alienating them from the process” (p. 3).

### **5.3 The post-conflict context**

Even though Rwanda has made a remarkable economic recovery after 1994 (Coulibaly, Ezemenari, and Duffy 2008), the country still faces important economic challenges: in 2006, almost 60 percent of Rwandans lived below the \$1 poverty line (World Bank 2006), and inequality levels were rising in the early 2000s (Ansoms 2005). In addition the distribution of resources is a continued issue of concern in Rwanda. Moreover, despite the efforts of the government to restore social ties, recent analyses show that feelings of interpersonal distrust are increasing in Rwanda (NURC 2008). All of these factors form a threat to sustainable peace in the country. The business climate in Rwanda is very favourable, however, and investments and remittance levels are increasing fast (World Bank 2008; 2010). In addition

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<sup>8</sup> Migrants coming from different ethnic groups and during different waves (see previous section).

return migration programs such as the MIDA program have been successful in implementing different programs in Rwanda in the past years.

In Burundi, however, the security situation is still fragile. In the years after the democratic elections, human rights abuses and corruption in the government are still reported (see e.g. HRW 2008; HRW 2009; Lemarchand 2006). News reports have recently indicated the emergence of new rebel groups in the north of the country. These developments form a serious threat to the country in general and to Burundi's efforts to create an effective and sustainable migration policy in particular. Moreover, the threat of renewed or continued conflict prevents diaspora members from investing in Burundi and engaging in return programs. This is currently a clear concern for Burundian migrants, who hesitate to return to their country of origin due to issues of safety, security, and often-poor living conditions (Turner and Mossin 2010).

During the years of conflict in Burundi, investments from the diaspora were few, and remittances were mainly sent to family members or for political goals (Fransen and Onga'yo 2010; Turner and Mossin 2010). Even though investments are increasing slowly in Burundi, the current level of investment is still low (Turner and Mossin 2010). This is due to the fact that Burundians in the diaspora have not reacted yet to the new situation of post-conflict Burundi, in which their position has changed from political actors to players in the post-conflict reconstruction processes. Another reason is that Burundians in the diaspora are highly educated but do not have a substantial level of wealth in order to make large investments.

## **6. Conclusion: Diaspora Engagement in Conflict-Affected Societies**

Many factors such as a lack of resources and a lack of experience within home country governments naturally have a negative effect on diaspora engagement processes in general

(Agunias 2009). In addition to these challenges, conflict-affected societies such as Rwanda and Burundi face their own legacies from the past that might challenge or inhibit the process of diaspora engagement. Conflict-affected societies are often in a very fragile state of peace and are likely to be ruled by conflict again (Junne and Verkoren 2005). The level of willingness of the diaspora to engage in their home countries heavily depends on the political and security context within the country. At the same time, the roles of the diaspora in post-conflict situations often changes from more politicized engagement to engagement in development and reconstruction.

Agunias (2009) distinguishes four important conditions that increase the potential of creating an effective and sustainable diaspora engagement infrastructure in home countries. First, countries should collect as much information about their diaspora as possible, and governments should learn from the experiences of other countries that already have created successful institutions for diaspora engagement. Second, there should be a strong line of communication between the home country and the diaspora. Third, there should be coordinated efforts of the government to engage the diaspora and, fourth, the government should create incentives for the diaspora to participate in development processes by taking a leading role in initiating different projects and programs for diaspora engagement.

Both Burundi and Rwanda have large diasporas spread across the globe with high concentrations in Europe, North America, and neighbouring countries. As these diasporas are increasingly considered as contributors to development, the challenge for the Burundian and Rwandan governments is to manage their diasporas' potential with sustainable international migration and diaspora policies. Based on the information available, it seems that Rwanda is taking an active role in not only engaging its diaspora but in specifically addressing the challenges that they face in their diaspora engagement efforts as a conflict-affected country. The Rwandan government specifically focuses on addressing the unity within the Rwandan

diaspora and on stimulating communication between diaspora groups and their home country government. Whether or not these efforts pay off is difficult to assess at this stage. The Rwandan government has also been actively mapping the needs and wants of its diaspora in order to create custom-made engagement initiatives by participating in the IOM diaspora database. Again, whether or not the diaspora database is a successful tool for a conflict-induced diaspora such as the Rwandan diaspora, which is characterized by diversity and low levels of trust, can only be analyzed after finalization of the database. The diaspora engagement initiatives in Rwanda are also embedded in the larger structure of the VISION 2020 development plan. Incorporating the diaspora engagement initiatives into a larger development plan will be more effective in the long run, as it creates a vision and clear goals (Agunias 2009; De Haas 2006).

Diaspora engagement in Burundi has until recently mostly relied on the initiatives of local and international organizations and different diaspora groups that operated without government support (Turner and Mossin 2010). The Burundian government is increasingly aware of its diaspora potential, but for the diaspora to contribute significantly to development, it is important that the Burundian government creates an effective and sustainable institutional environment within which this potential can thrive. For effective policy making, cooperation between ministries, international organizations, and diaspora groups is a necessity (IOM 2009). In addition, policies should be based and built on existing initiatives to effectively make use of the resources that the diaspora has. To this end the Burundian government should invest first in creating a clear overview of its diaspora, including its size, resources, and needs. One of the first tasks of the Diaspora Directorate is to map the diaspora, but it is still unclear how large of a challenge this will be.

Despite all of the challenges that accompany diaspora engagement for conflict-affected societies, there are some important opportunities for engaging diasporas in

development processes to mention as well. First, the involvement of diaspora groups in home-country affairs is often more accepted by local citizens as compared to the activities of donor countries and international organizations. This element of diaspora engagement is especially important in conflict-affected societies, which are often characterized by high levels of distrust towards international involvement (Newland and Patrick 2004). Second, diaspora communities often have strong ties with their origin countries and possess the knowledge on local processes that international actors might lack: “While Diasporas may exist physically outside the conflict zone, they have historical, cultural, economic and emotional ties to the direct actors in the conflict” (Cochrane 2007).

Third, diasporas often have a lot to offer their homeland. Both the Burundian and Rwandan diasporas have high levels of education as compared to the average educational level in their home countries. Moreover, remittances are increasing steadily in both countries. Fourth, different diasporas often exert a high level of commitment to their country of origin (see e.g. Warnecke 2010). The Burundian and Rwandan diasporas have been politically active in the past years, and many individuals have organized themselves into numerous associations and groups through which they are involved in different dynamics within their home countries. This commitment, if managed well, is an important factor in determining diaspora potential for development. As Newland and Patrick (2004) mention: “the dense web of ties between the diaspora and country of origin is, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the creation of individuals and groups acting on their own initiative [...]” (p. 17). For the creation of successful diaspora policies in the development arena, policy makers should therefore recognize that diasporas “*are* already mobilized” (De Haas 2006, p. ii).

Overall, however, research on diaspora involvement and the effectiveness of this involvement is currently limited. A clear lack of data exists on the sizes and location of different diasporas (Oucho 2006) and about the needs of different diaspora groups. Moreover,

information on the opportunities they can contribute to local reconstruction and development processes is limited. Not much is known about the relationships within and among different diasporas in their host countries and on the relationship between the home country governments and their diasporas abroad as well. Having insufficient knowledge on its diaspora might lead a government to selectively address its diaspora by only focusing on the most visible or organized groups (see e.g. Sinatti 2010). In general the information on the impact diaspora can have on reconstruction and peace-building in conflict-affected societies is limited as well (Warnecke 2010). Future research should address these issues in order to create sound and effective policy advice.

For all diaspora engagement initiatives to succeed in conflict-affected societies such as Burundi and Rwanda, however, the most important condition is that the countries' security situations remain stable and become increasingly robust in the near future. This will enhance the trust that diasporas have in their own governments and will make the countries more attractive in terms of businesses and investments. In addition, incentives will be created for diaspora members to engage in either temporary or permanent return programs. Whereas in Rwanda the future looks promising, Burundi still has a long way to go. It is particularly important to engage the diaspora in moving from being political actors to being engaged for reconstruction and development and enhancing the relationships between the Burundian government and its citizens abroad.

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## Appendix 1: Institutions Dealing with Diaspora Engagement in Rwanda & Burundi

Rwanda		Burundi	
Institution	Responsibility	Institution	Responsibility
<b>GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS</b>			
Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation (MINAFFET), Diaspora General Directorate (DGD)	-enforces the linkages between Rwanda and its citizens abroad. -provides information on investment possibilities, job opportunities, practical assistance to Rwandans who would like to be involved in their home country	Ministry of External Relations and Internal Cooperation created the Directorate of Diaspora	diaspora engagement, with understanding the greater diaspora and forging connections with them
Rwandan Diaspora Mutual Fund (RDMF) with the National Bank of Rwanda (BNR)	Supervised by the DGD and designed to collect the financial resources from Rwandans living abroad to invest in national development	Ministry of Labour and Civil Service	runs the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA)
		Ministry of Public Security in Burundi	has been given exclusive responsibility to address migration management issues and to construct the migration and diaspora involvement policy
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY</b>			
Rwanda Global Diaspora Network (RGDN)	-umbrella organization for promoting cooperation and communication among the Rwandan diaspora. -the goal of this network is to stimulate financial transfers from the diaspora to Rwanda		
<b>INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS</b>			
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	-Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) Great Lakes under DGD supervision -working on World Diaspora Database	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) Great Lakes run by the Ministry of Labour and Civil Service, helps shape migration and development policy

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	volunteer services provided		
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	- support project to the Implementation of The Rwanda Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Volunteer Programme - under DGD supervision		
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS <sup>9</sup>			
Rwanda Convention Association (RCA)		Mutualité d'Epargne et de Crédit (Mutec)	
Rwanda-American Chamber of Commerce (RACC)		Competences Sans Frontiers (CSF),	to involve the Burundian Diaspora in development
Rwanda Diaspora Investment Ltd.		Communauté Burundaise de Belgique (CBB).	
		CIRID (Centre Indépendant de Recherches et d'Initiatives pour le Dialogue or Independent Centre of Research and Initiative for the Dialogue)	promotes peaceful dialogue, the organization has also been involved in various development projects
PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS			
		BCB (Banque de Crédit de Bujumbura)	started two initiatives to help the diaspora in their financial activities in Burundi

<sup>9</sup> These are only examples and not an exhaustive list of NGOs working on diaspora engagement

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